



16. Amazonia from East to West: synthesizing perspectives on foraging societies in lowland South Ame

16230 - The Archaeological Record of the First Settlers of the Amazon Forest

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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Understanding variability in hunter-gatherer and early food-producing societies as an underpinning for the evolution of complexity is a key concept in archaeological studies throughout the world, as well as for understanding modern foraging societies, but not well known for the Amazon region. For a long period the lack, or dearth, of knowledge about the archaeological record associated with ancient human occupation in the Amazon region was explained by ecological models based on variables such as resource distribution (e.g., protein, carbohydrate) and soil characteristics. These models were based on assumptions that the ecological variables in the past presented the same characteristics as today, and that human occupation in the Amazon was possible only through a subsistence strategy that had as its base a diet directly or indirectly secured by horticulture. In the last decades ethnographic, ecological, paleoenvironmental and archaeological studies have been demonstrating the fallacy of many of these premises, especially the presence of an archaeological record indicating human colonization of lowland South America during the Early Holocene period. A detailed assessment of such studies suggests that the archaeological record, once believed to be spatially limited and rare, was mostly associated with natural rockshelters; however, nowadays this record has expanded, not only from a geographical point of view, but contains a richness and diversity of empirical evidence associated with rockshelters and open air sites. This presentation will reexamine this debate based on new archaeological evidence obtained from archaeological sites found along important tributaries of the right margin of the Amazon River: Madeira, Xingu, Araguaia and Tocantins.

16183 - The Hupdah and their mobility in the Region of the Uaupé Basin

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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In this paper I discuss the Hupdah people residing in the Uaupés River Basin of Brazil's Northwest Amazon region. The Uaupés is an affluent of the upper Rio Negro and the Hupdah are described in the ethnographic literature as nomadic hunter-gatherers representing one of the six Nadahup (Maku) linguistic family subgroups. I will engage in the concept of territoriality currently embraced by a number of Amerindian groups and following this I present a theoretical discussion on the aspects of Hupdah mobility.

16160 - Ideology and Subjectivity in Relations among Makuan Foragers and Tukanoan Farmers in the Vaupés Basin of the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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This paper constitutes a critical re-examination of existing literature that presents the hierarchy among Tukanoan horticulturalists and Makuan hunters as fact rather than artifact of Tukanoan ideology. The proposition espoused here holds that the relation was the reverse of that presumed: using data from fieldwork on production and labor among paired Maku/Tukano sibs, it argues that Tukanoan society was dependent, in ways not previously examined, upon Makuan labor. The Makuan interest in manufactured goods, is, in turn, placed within a larger framework of local-global trade networks.

Inter-ethnic relations between Makuan (Nadahup) foragers and Tukanoan farmers in the northwest Amazon of Brazil and Colombia has long piqued the interests of anthropologists, historians, and travelers. Reports by travelers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries depicted the relationship between the two ethnicities as master-and-slave in which the more powerful Tukanoans captured and subordinated the weaker Maku (Coudreau 1887; Koch Grünberg 1909). Later ethnographers rejected those depictions, suggesting instead a mutualism in which carbohydrate-poor Makuan hunters relied upon sedentary Tukanoan horticulturalists for garden products while the protein-scarce fisher-horticulturalists, in turn, relied on the hunters to supplement protein shortages (Ramos 1980; Milton 1983). A new study has reverted to the earlier depictions of captivity and servitude (Santos-Granero 2009) by basing the argument in Tukanoan imperatives to build numbers through captivity. Analysts' uncritical replication of these political representations has contributed to the reification of categories of subjugation and furthered spurious western notions of universal, natural hierarchies.

Close scrutiny of the relations among the two ethnicities reveals a surprising fiction in prevailing representations of domination. The presumed dominance and subordination in the so-called master-slave engagement of Tukanoan and Makuan speakers, we argue, are discursively constituted. Instead, this paper upends existing presumptions to argue that traditional Tukanoans were far more dependent upon Makuans, and Makuans, in turn, far more at liberty, than previously realized.

Unlike prior analyses, the proposal here stresses the dependence of high-ranked Tukanoan clans on Makuan labor. It draws on field data to demonstrate the extent to which high ranked Tukanoan sibs relied upon Makuan associates to maintain their status. The work further repositions Makuan as key suppliers and purchasers in a network of Indian-missionary-global relations.

The analysis put forth differs from prior approaches in identifying Tukanoan ideology as a driver of ethnic relations between the Tukano and Maku. When Tukanoan reliance on the relationship with Maku laborers is taken into account, and when the greater manoeuvrability of the Maku is recognized, a new picture emerges. The revised interpretation differs from former depictions of both servitude and mutuality, yet it accounts for and makes sense of both.

16147 - Tracing foragers' roles in northern Amazonian social networks: Insights from lexical borrowing

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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Mounting evidence suggests that Amazonia has long been characterized by extensive networks of interaction, linking groups associated with different languages, ethnic affiliations, and subsistence orientations. Ethnohistorical records, documentation of trade routes, and more contemporary ethnographic studies point toward regional zones of intensive trade, intermarriage, and ritual interaction, themselves once connected by wider networks (e.g. Epps forthcoming, Hornborg & Hill 2011). Yet we know very little about the dynamics of these interactions in the past – which groups were involved, what their roles and relative power relations might have been, what aspects of people's lives were most affected by the interaction, and how its intensity varied across time. Linguistic evidence – the traces contact has left behind in the languages of the respective groups – offers exciting opportunities to investigate these questions. By considering these traces, we can gather clues to the (linguistic) identities of the participants involved, what sorts of social and cultural exchanges took place (trade, intermarriage, etc.), how long ago they occurred, and what kind of social dynamics may have pertained (e.g. unilateral borrowing implies a social imbalance, whereas bilateral borrowing implies a more equal relationship).

In this talk, I investigate the dynamics of interactions among northern Amazonian foragers and their neighbors over time through the patterns of lexical borrowing evident in their languages. I draw on the results of a large-scale study of lexical borrowing across a comprehensive set of northern Amazonian languages (involving nearly 100 languages from more than 30 distinct language families), based on a defined list of over 300 meanings associated with basic vocabulary (i.e. words for ubiquitous concepts like 'arm', 'sun', 'rock', etc.), flora and fauna, and material and ritual culture. Focusing on a set of groups that are closest to the foraging end of the subsistence spectrum (linguistically defined as Nadahup/Makú, Kaku-Nukak, Hodï, Waorani, and Yanomama), I compare the patterns of lexical borrowing evident in their languages to those of the other languages in the region. Lexical evidence indicates that interaction has ranged from sporadic to intense; that the foraging groups have tended to be recipients of linguistic material, rather than donors, suggesting a social imbalance; and that foragers were likely to adopt certain cultural practices (including horticultural activities) from their neighbors. However, many of these observations also apply to other regional groups who are not known to have a particularly strong foraging orientation, suggesting that foraging itself is only part of a larger constellation of features that have been relevant in determining the dynamics of interaction among indigenous northern Amazonians over time.

16163 - Leveraging history and contact: the Awá-Guajá engagement with neighbors, frontiers and development in Brazil's Amazon region

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Forline, Louis (Univ. of Nevada, Reno, Reno, USA)*

In this paper, we examine Awá-Guajá ethnohistory by looking at their relationship with neighboring indigenous communities, the Amazonian frontier, and the forces of globalization. The Awá-Guajá are one of the last groups of foragers in the world and came into permanent contact with Brazilian mainstream society in 1973. Since then, they were settled into four semi-nucleated communities by Brazil's Indian Service, FUNAI. Once contact was established, the Awá-Guajá have transitioned quickly into a settled life, practicing various degrees of hunting, gathering, fishing and farming, in addition to their engagement with elements of Brazil's rapidly expanding frontier in the Amazon. Brazil's stepped-up involvement with the world economy has impinged on the indigenous peoples of this region and in this paper we explore how mining interests and other large-scale projects have impacted their community. While the Awá-Guajá have received more visibility from the national and international media the impacts of contact from outside economic interests have been set in motion and transformed their lives in significant ways. The Awá-Guajá have relied on both internal mechanisms to cope with change and also articulate with different interlocutors from mainstream Brazilian society and the international community to reshape their future. In this paper I argue that the cross-currents in globalization present a nuanced set of alternatives for foraging peoples and show that these forces both assist and compromise the Awá-Guajá and other indigenous actors in the 21st century. In this respect, new relationships are created with neighboring indigenous communities and are transformed by the machinations of regional and national development regimes.